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COMIC & CARD PICKS

Inside information for comic dealers and collectors!

#10

USA $2.95 / Canada $3.99 March 1995

MARVEL GOES TO WAR!™

GOES AFTER HOT ARTISTS! THE MILLION DOLLAR DEAL!

GRABS WONDER WOMAN ARTIST! INTERVIEW!

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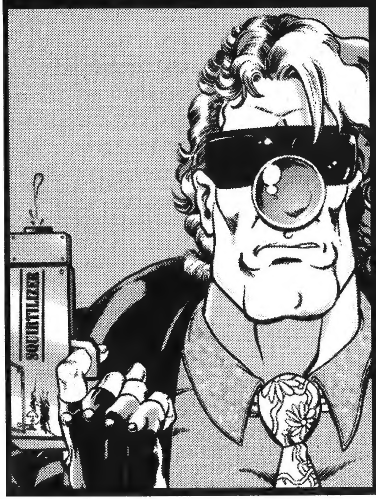

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VANTAGE™ COMIC & CARD PICKS number -10-

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Vantage Comic & Card Picks
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TOP PICK OF THE MONTH

Glory #1 (Image / Extreme / Mike Deodato art)
Wonder Woman #85, #90-up, #0 (DC / Mike Deodato art / new direction)

MORE VANTAGE PICKS

Avengers #380-up (Marvel / Mike Deodato pencils, for years)
The Barbie Twins Adventures #1 (Topps / New "bad girl" twist)
Gene Roddenberry's Lost Universe #4, variant (Big Ent. / Tekno•Comix / variant)
Gen 13 #1-up (Image / Wildstorm / mini was hot)
Neil Gaiman's Wheel of Worlds #0
(Big Ent. / Tekno•Comix / variant)
Santa Claws
(Malibu / Eternity / first U.S. Deodato back-issues)
Solar #46
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Solar, all recent issues
(Acclaim Comics / Valiant / low print runs)
Superman #100, Collectors and Standard editions
(DC / Death of Clark Kent launch)
Wonder Woman #88-89 (DC / new direction)
X-O Manowar #44 (Acclaim Comics / Valiant / first new Sears)

Watch for the Vantage Star indicating our top picks!

"The above pick list is a guide based on research, advisors' opinions, and staff opinions — keep in mind that even the experts will disagree. Comics can lose value after months or years. Read over the facts and opinions in Vantage, examine the pick list, and then make your own decisions. Remember: 1) There's no sure thing. Never bet the farm on any one book. 2) It may be fun to hunt for winners, but comics are even more fun to read! Open up one of those polybags and give comics a try!"

- Publisher Rob Golub

MARVEL GOES TO WAR

What's Marvel up to? It's the talk of the town. The answer is simple: Marvel is up to a strong and aggressive plan to improve sales and command the industry. Malibu, Welsh, Heroes World, Marvelution, and new artist hirings are all part of a concerted effort to put Marvel in the driver's seat.

Of course, a Marvel on the move is a good thing. Marvel could jump-start the industry, coming up with new ideas that only they have the resources to implement.

But retailers and publishers are concerned. I think it's not that people are afraid of Marvel as much as they're actually afraid of Marvel bumping into them while at work. Like a person who steps on ants by mistake, as Marvel moves and changes the industry there's no telling who they may unsettle on the way.

In truth, it will probably be for the best. The people who run Marvel are pretty darned smart, and if Marvel has to inflict a few bruises along the way, it's probably for the good of the industry.

Every company in the industry will have to learn to adapt to the changes as they come. That's what business is all about. It's survival of the fittest under changing conditions.

For now, I'll react like other retailers and publishers I've spoken with. Cautious optimism. Watching carefully. Concerned but hopeful.

But there's not much more I can do, except to have faith in Marvel. They're the industry leader, and the ball's on their side of the court. I'm hopeful their next moves will be carefully considered and for the good of the industry. And I'm hopeful there won't be too many ants, if any.

— Rob Golub, Publisher

HOT NEW ARTIST, TOP WRITER TO DO UNDERPLAYED IMAGE BOOK!

The hot new artist who has helped make **Wonder Woman** into a growing hit joins top writer Jo Duffy on a new underplayed Image title.

Glory #1 may sound like just another out of dozens of Image books, but it's not. This book has five incredible things going for it:

1) Mike Deodato does the pencils and his art is just out of this world. For more on this new artist see the **Wonder Woman** article.

2) The writer is Jo Duffy, an accomplished professional comic book writer, not a hack, and not an artist.

3) Extreme Studios, which has demonstrated an understanding of the aftermarket in the past (split covers, coupons, etc.) is the publisher (through Image).

4) This is a bad girl book. Deodato renders an amazingly beautiful bad girl, as we know from **Wonder Woman.** Put his pencils on an Image book and stand back.

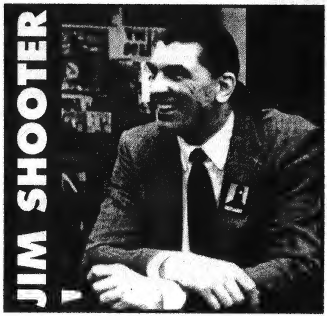
5) Look for orders to come in low. Extreme sales had been flat for awhile, though some retailers are now reporting a recovery. Still, retailers are likely to order cautiously low. Speculators should miss this book altogether. It's just another Image #1 right? Yeah, right.

The drawbacks to **Glory** are twofold: (1) She's an Amazon from a distant island. We've heard this before. (2) Deodato will likely stick with the book for just a few issues. The artist told **Vantage.** He'll also use members of his studio in Brazil to "assist." If Deodato leaves **Glory** too soon, it could slow the market just as things get started. However, when Deodato later takes off at Marvel, look for Deodato **Glory** books to burn anyway. In the short term, it'll be up to Jo Duffy to keep the readers that Deodato pulls in.

Oh, and there's one more thing. As we go to press, the Image/Deodato contract has not even been signed yet, even though **Glory** #1 has already been offered with Deodato pencils in the catalogs. Deodato says he's on it for sure, though.

Due out in March.

TV GIANT HIRES SHOOTER & STAFF!
MAKERS OF "SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE" TO PUBLISH COMICS!



Broadway Video, an influential company in the movie and television industry, has announced the formation of Broadway Comics, led by Jim Shooter.

Shooter is the former Editor-in-Chief of Marvel Comics who co-founded Valiant and then Defiant, which ultimately shut down its operations. Broadway Comics will launch its first title in August of 1995.

Broadway Video is not well-known among the general public, but the company is so notable in the entertainment industry that the importance of this event cannot be overstated. Broadway Video produces and distributes television shows such as **Saturday Night Live** and **The Conan O'Brian Show.** The company owns the rights to major properties including **Kids in the Hall, Lassie, The Lone Ranger,** and **Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer.**

A peek at the staff roster for Broadway Comics makes this new division of Broadway Video look like a Defiant reunion. It appears that Defiant has essentially moved to Broadway. Thus we can probably expect a similar style of marketing and production.

Poorly-marketed card sets, the market crash, and the Marvel lawsuit against Defiant were the cause of the company's demise, said Broadway Comics Director of Sales & Marketing (and former Defiant Marketing Director) Clark Smith. After Defiant fell, Broadway Video immediately showed interest, and the deal with Shooter was quickly signed.

Shooter and his team are currently working on the development of Broadway Comics' initial projects, including **Powers That Be,** a universe of science fiction and super-heroes, and **Electropolis,** an electronic underground inhabited by characters known as Technomancers.

Broadway Comics has no plans to turn Broadway Video properties into comic books. Rather, Broadway Comics will focus on creating its own story concepts, which Broadway Video intends to later use for television shows or movies, said Smith. This could have a powerful effect on the market for books from Broadway Comics.

"Four really good books" on a monthly basis is the company's first goal, with an emphasis on "quality, not quantity," said Smith. The four monthly books will be written by Shooter.

Shooter also plans to open a creator-owned imprint at Broadway Comics. The company has yet to begin signing creators.

WONDER WOMAN STARTS TO BURN!

YES, WE SAID WONDER WOMAN!

You may already be aware of the heat for a couple issues of **Wonder Woman** (thanks to the industry top ten lists), but **Vantage** expects the heat to turn into a brush fire and spread to more individual **Wonder Woman** books. **Wonder Woman** has already doubled circulation in just the past several months, *and it's still climbing!*

In fact, it is little-known **Wonder Woman** #85 that could steal the show, the first issue to be penciled by Mike Deodato. This guy Deodato draws like Jim Lee, and his female renditions are, well, let's just say they're really enjoyable. This amazing artist, who lives in Brazil, is yet another international talent. In fact, Deodato doesn't speak English (we communicated with him in Brazil through a Portuguese translator). His art, however, speaks volumes.

Bottom line: Deodato is HOT. After #85 (with an inker that didn't do Deodato justice), the next installment from Deodato was #90. This issue (and all that follow) was penciled *and* inked by Deodato, and fans may come to think of it as his true first issue.

Deodato plans to stay on **Wonder Woman** until #100, the artist told us. Afterwards, Deodato may turn **Wonder Woman** over to his studio, his agent told **Vantage.** This

gives us several more months of Deodato **Wonder Woman**, enough time for some more heat to accumulate. Even though Deodato will leave **Wonder Woman** this summer, look for these **Wonder Woman** books to retain value as the books that introduced Deodato to the fans.

Wonder Woman #90 kicks off a daring new storyline from talented scribe William Messner-Loebs. Wonder Woman's mother, Hippolyta, must choose a new Wonder Woman. She decides based on a contest. The winner is a darker Amazon named Artemis. Diana, the original Wonder Woman, chooses to remain in the outside world even though Hippolyta suggests otherwise. Diana too has become darker. The storyline may sound a little replayed, but the details are actually done with quite a bit of originality. The book is hard to put down and the art really is gorgeous.

It's also pretty hard to find as a back issue. **Wonder Woman** #90 may still be worth no more than cover as you read this, but dealers are often sold out and demand has been rising for all **Wonder Woman** back-issues rapidly. If you want a #90 you may have to search a bit.

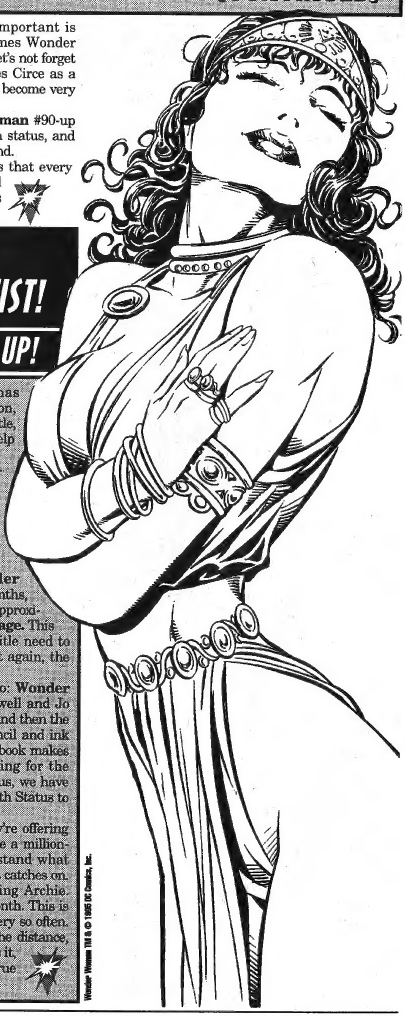
Besides **Wonder Woman** #90, which kicks off the storyline, #92 is also important, for this is

WONDER WOMAN STARTS TO BURN! (CONTINUED)

where Artemis wins the contest. Doubly important is **Wonder Woman** #93 where Artemis becomes Wonder Woman and Diana dons a new costume. And, let's not forget **Wonder Woman** #88-89, which re-introduces Circe as a "bad girl," and **Wonder Woman** #0 which has become very hard to find.

The end result here is that **Wonder Woman** #90-up are easy candidates for Top Pick of the Month status, and **Wonder Woman** #88-89 don't trail too far behind.

The kicker for this assortment of picks is that every issue of **Wonder Woman** is filled with "bad girls" lately, the hot trend of 1994-5. These books are easy Top Picks of the Month.



MARVEL TO GRAB WONDER WOMAN ARTIST!

BACK-ISSUES COULD HEAT UP!

Hot new artist Mike Deodato, who has helped double **Wonder Woman's** circulation, intends to pencil and ink a monthly Marvel title, say sources close to the artist. This should help Deodato back-issues significantly.

The artist has entered into a verbal agreement with Marvel (not yet signed) to pencil and ink a monthly Marvel title starting this summer. Deodato already does breakdown pencils on **Avengers** (#380-up), but Tom Palmer's heavy inking tends to keep Deodato's artwork from shining through.

While only planning to pencil **Wonder Woman** and **Glory** for the next several months, Deodato now plans to pencil **Avengers** for approximately two years or more, the artist told **Vantage.** This is the critical longevity that an artist and title need to spend together for real market response, but again, the inking is disappointing.

Vantage foresees the following scenario: **Wonder Woman** continues to heat up, **Glory** does well and Jo Duffy's writing keeps some readers on board, and then the nameless Marvel book that Deodato is to pencil and ink finally explodes. **Deodato's** first issue of this book makes the top ten lists and collectors go scrambling for the **Wonder Woman** and **Glory** back-issues. Thus, we have enthusiastically assigned Top Pick of The Month Status to these books.

Marvel isn't stupid. We understand they're offering this Brazilian native enough money to become a millionaire in just a few short years. They understand what Deodato can do for sales when the aftermarket catches on. You don't get that kind of money for drawing Archie.

This is not just any old top pick of the month. This is one of those special picks that comes along every so often. It's quiet. It's gonna be big. It's rumbling in the distance, like thunder. Marvel knows it, **Vantage** knows it, and now you know it. Mike Deodato is the true Top Pick of the Month for this issue.

Wonder Woman TM & © 1995 DC Comics, Inc.

MARVEL BUYS HEROES WORLD!

COMPETITORS NOW SELL TO EACH OTHER!

Marvel Entertainment Group has acquired Heroes World, a large comic book distribution company. This now makes Marvel responsible for distributing an estimated ten percent of its competitors' U.S. comic books and related product.

Technically Marvel has acquired the distribution operations of Superhero Enterprises, which does business as Heroes World Distribution Co., the nation's third-largest comic book distributor.

Serving much of the Northeast, Heroes World purchases comics from all publishers, promotes them in a catalog (**Comics Scoreboard**), picks the comics up from the printer, divides and counts them, trucks them to comic book stores, and then bills the stores at a profit. Since comic book stores generally prefer to buy most comics through distributors, Heroes World and other distributors have tremendous say over what eventually makes its way into the local comic shop.

Heroes World competes with Diamond Comics Distributors and Capital City Distribution, the only two comic book distribution companies that truck to comic shops all over the nation. Heroes World offers UPS service to stores outside of the Northeast, but stores generally purchase most of their comics from distributors that can offer them individual trucking service, which is faster.

According to a statement issued by Marvel, Heroes World "will be expanded to provide both national and international distribution to comic book retailers worldwide." It is unclear whether this means that Marvel/Heroes World intends to offer trucking to retailers outside the Northeast.

In recent years, competition in the Northeast has intensified as Diamond and Capital have each opened new warehouses inside Heroes World's home turf, the New York City area. At the same time, Heroes World has doubled the number of stores they serve to an estimated high of up to 1000 shops. Heroes World has also aggressively promoted their national "Comics On Call" service which offers UPS-delivered comics for retailers who decide they need extras (reorders) after advance-orders come in by truck.

After the acquisition was announced, **X-Men Alpha** came out with sales beyond many retailers expectations. Weeks later, Comics On Call reportedly had **X-Men Alpha** available to retailers for reorder. At the same time, Capital & Diamond were out. This may be a small sign of things to come.

Heroes World also publishes **Comics Scoreboard**. A competitor of Diamond's **Previews** and Capital's **Advance Comics**, **Comics Scoreboard** is sold by some of the shops in the Northeast that buy their comics from Heroes World. However, some Northeast shops carry Diamond's **Previews** but actually order most of their comics from Heroes World.

Heroes World distributes comics, cards, and related items from Maine to Virginia. The acquisition does not include the five retail stores owned by Superhero Enterprises.

Terry C. Stewart, Marvel Comics president and COO said, "Working with Heroes World, we can market and promote our books more effectively and improve the service we provide comic book retailers."

Founded in 1975 by Ivan Snyder, Heroes World began as a comic book mail-order company that later opened comic book stores and then finally turned its focus to distribution.

MARVEL CUTS TITLES, STAFF

Marvel has decided to cut as much as 30 monthly titles and has terminated about twenty staff members in recent weeks, **Vantage** has learned. More cuts may be on the way, say sources close to the situation.

Days after the cuts, Marvel issued a statement saying, "As the next major move in Marvelution, Marvel Comics is refocusing its line by eliminating a number of slower-moving, less-profitable titles during 1995 in order to channel more editorial, creative, production, marketing, sales, and promotional resources into Marvel's best sellers and industry favorites."

"The end result is an even stronger group of high-quality Marvel titles, based on proven characters that have demonstrated their ability to generate sales and fan appeal in both up and down markets," said Terry Stewart, President and COO, Marvel Comics.

The Marvel statement also said that Marvel plans to "relaunch" its major comics groups — X-Men, Spider-Man, Marvel Heroes, Marvel Edge, 2099, and General Entertainment — starting with 2099 in March. Specific changes in Marvel's title line-up will be announced as they are made in the catalogs.

"We hope the rest of the industry will follow our lead and help end the current title glut," Stewart added, "Unfortunately, reducing slower titles means we'll be reducing some positions in editorial and related departments and changing some freelance assignments. We also appreciate that fans don't like to see their personal favorites cancelled. When possible, we'll fold cancelled characters and story lines into better-selling, related titles or provide definitive endings."

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REACTION TO MARVEL'S PURCHASE OF HEROES WORLD

"DC congratulates Ivan and Irene Snyder on the sale of Heroes World to Marvel and we wish them all the best. Since we have not had the opportunity to discuss the matter with any of the parties involved, we have no further comment at this time and we will proceed with business as usual.

— Paul Levitz, Executive Vice President and Publisher, DC Comics

"I was surprised to hear about the buy-out, but I'm maintaining a positive outlook. Distributing smaller publishers can make Marvel look profitable — look at the successes of the Turtles, The Crow, The Tick, Shi, and Zen. It wouldn't be smart business if they just distributed Marvel titles, so I'm hoping that they'll use their influence to get us into more markets that are currently untapped. Whatever happens will be interesting."

— Don Chin, Publisher, Entity Comics

"No comment."

— Marty Stever, Vice President - Marketing, Acclaim Comics

"This could mean serious changes in the comic industry. But, if Marvel continues to distribute through everyone, I don't know why it would be such a problem. I wouldn't be surprised though if DC (Warner) were looking at purchasing a company themselves."

— Joseph Naftali, Publisher, August House

"I don't think anybody's quite sure why Marvel did it."

— Steve Zykowski, Lightning Comics

"The effect on the industry will depend on Marvel's plans for Heroes World. We don't know Marvel's intentions."

— A statement issued by Capital City Distribution, Inc.

Capital City's Response

Capital City Distribution provided **Vantage** with the following statement:

The effect on the industry will depend on Marvel's plans for Heroes World. We don't know Marvel's intentions. For now, we plan to continue offering a full line of comics and related products, including Marvel's. We know of nothing that could change our legal and business relationship with Marvel.

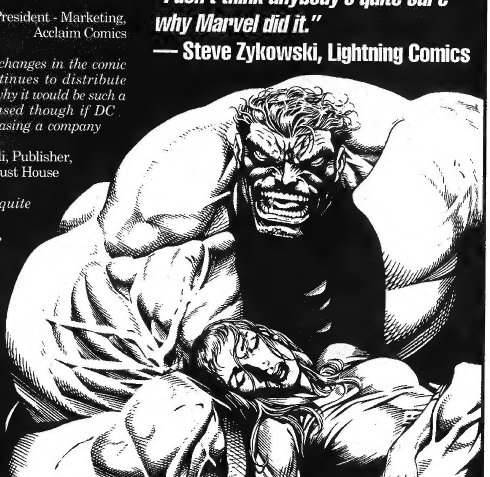
Capital City Distribution, Inc. continues to believe that exclusive distribution arrangements do not meet the diverse needs of specialty retailers. Heroes World remains one of our competitors and will continue to be a competitor under Marvel ownership. To truly compete, however, we believe a firm needs to offer a full line of products and complete services, such as our nationwide reorder confirmation system.

As the present time, we do not expect the acquisition of Heroes World to affect Capital City Distribution, Inc. Future effects will depend on Marvel's actions. Over time, it could create new customers for Capital City Distribution.

Any changes brought about by the Marvel purchase of Heroes World will not alter our dedication to support our retailers. We intend to continue the programs which have made us an industry leader.

"I don't think anybody's quite sure why Marvel did it."

— Steve Zykowski, Lightning Comics



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FABULOUS FIRST ISSUE!

THE END IS ONLY THE BEGINNING...

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BY JOHN MIGLIORE
& RAFF IENCO

ENTITY COMICS

ASTER #4
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VANTAGE

HEROES WORLD: WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR THE INDUSTRY?

The **Vantage** phone has been ringing off the hook with calls from pros, insiders, and retailers looking to shoot the breeze about Marvel's acquisition of Heroes World. Here's what people have been saying (though not necessarily **Vantage**). We stress that these are people's *opinions:*

Some people suggest that Marvel might open up its own chain of comic book shops, cutting out today's retailers.

• Some people suggest that Marvel might open up its own chain of comic book shops, cutting out today's retailers. With a distributor in hand, Marvel could now cheaply and easily give its own stores service without having to pay an outside distribution company.

• Marvel might be unsatisfied with the level of push given to Marvel products (the reason for True Believer and a better looking Sales to Astonish), and Marvel might have purchased Heroes World to push its products even more.

• If Diamond owns Overstreet, and Overstreet advertises in Heroes World's **Comics Scoreboard**, and Heroes World buys comics from Malibu, and Marvel owns Malibu, and Marvel takes out an ad in Overstreet — who is my customer and who is my competitor?

• During a slow time for the industry Marvel saw an opportunity to pick up Heroes World for cheap and they took it. It was a gift horse they could not look in the mouth.

• Everything may just stay the same. The distribution system is efficient and Marvel will not want to change it, except to have Heroes World give Marvel products stronger push.

• Some people suggest that Marvel could cease offering product through Diamond and Capital. If your store is not near a warehouse and you want Marvel product, you might have to get UPS shipping service through Heroes World. Marvel could start small by at first making only one or two new titles "Heroes World Only" books. Other distributors might respond by focusing more on smaller publishers, or by entering into their own exclusive deals with Marvel competitors. Niche marketing.

• Marvel could start an authorized dealer program, similar to what's done in other industries. If you want Marvel product, you'll have to order everything that Marvel puts out in certain set quantities.

• Heroes World could cease offering non-Marvel product and focus on Marvel only.

ACCLAIM COMICS IS HERE!

BIRTHQUAKE™

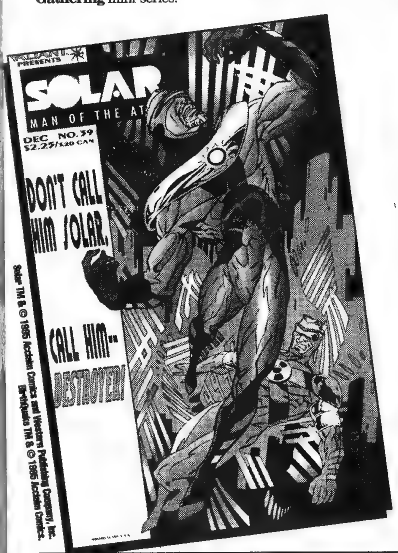
LAUNCHES THE NEW VALIANT!

Changes Are Finalized

Acclaim Comics, formerly Voyager/Valiant, has instituted title cancellations and other changes as **Vantage** reported last issue.

Valiant is calling the event "Birthquake," where, as of March, the following changes take place:

- Dan Jurgens will pencil and write **Solar** as of #46.
- Bart Sears will pencil **X-O Manowar** once a month.
- Several books are cancelled.
- Most of the books not cancelled will start to come out twice a month as of March.
- Voyager, owner of the Valiant imprint, is now Acclaim Comics.
- Acclaim Comics has three divisions: Valiant, Windjammer (creator owned), and Armada (licensing).
- Armada's first project will be a **Magic: The Gathering** mini-series.



Death of Solar? Valiant Hour?

Dan Jurgens, who wrote the now-famous **Superman** #75 and **Zero Hour** #0-up (or should we say down?), now brings his considerable talent and reputation to Valiant. **Vantage** is watching very carefully. Though some might argue that too much of the credit has been heaped upon Jurgens — that he didn't actually come up with the whole Death of Superman concept and that Zero Hour wasn't all his either — the reputation is still out there and it does precede him.

After all, Jurgens did write **Supes** #75 and **Zero Hour** #0-up so he must be doing something right. In spite of Jurgens' past successes, Valiant says they have no plans for Jurgens to create an epic imprint-wide storyline. We certainly can't fault them for that. The market shies away from inter-title crossovers these days, and most retailers agree that The Chaos Effect sales were disappointing.

Avoiding a "*Valiant* Hour" may be for the best, but a "*Solar* Hour" does seem probable. Indeed, Acclaim Comics *has* promised **Vantage** that the new Solar storyline will be "epic" in scope. Here's what Valiant has put into writing regarding the first Dan Jurgens **Solar** book:

Solar, Man of the Atom #46

Brave New World — First of a five-part series by superstar Dan Jurgens that will shake Solar's universe off its foundations! This issue

BIRTHQUAKE!™ (CONTINUED)

introduces a new hero, The Sentry, who's tracking down some mysterious sightings of a guy in a red costume with a radiation symbol on his chest. In the meantime it's business as usual: the President is still a former WWII patriotic superhero, physicist Phil Seleski is still trying to get his new reactor online, and villains like Casket Jack are still making headlines ... Say what?

The above paragraph sounds very Jurgens to us. When we first read this, we half-expected that red costume to have an "S" on the chest rather than a radiation symbol. If you're looking for Superman's tomb, you won't find it here but this may be the next best place. You should find a nice Jurgens-style read and perhaps some market reaction as well.

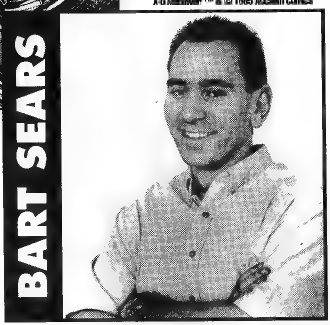
Numbers for all books coming out these days are low, but a quick glance at our "New Valiant" article (next page) reveals that **Solar** is low even by current Valiant standards. Should new readers flock to **Solar,** demand could quickly exceed supply for pre-Jurgens issues. As for the Jurgens books themselves, keep in mind that retailers are ordering cautiously lately. **Vantage** bets collectors will simply be unable to find **Solar** #46 in a year. The question is, will they be looking for it? We'll wait and see if Jurgens can bring his magic touch to **Solar.**

Another X-O Manowar #14? A Vantage Fantasy?

X-O Manowar #14 was a quite a hot book in its day. One of the great ironies of comic book publishing is that market value often hits a book through sheer dumb luck, making the publisher look like a marketing genius. Two years ago it might have been genius, it might have been luck, or it might have been somebody's goof, but whatever it was, it was good. For some reason known only to Capital City Distribution and Valiant, **X-O Manowar** #14 was not solicited in **Advance Comics** as having a Bart Sears cover. **Previews** carried and pushed the cover.

The result was that #14 came in severely underordered and it went to triple-cover almost instantly. Of course, the building Valiant excitement and the beautiful violet cover didn't hurt. Nor did the fact that **X-O** was a great read. There's little doubt that #14 helped to keep the Valiant aftermarket going for a few more months at the time.

Valiant could use something similar for **X-O Manowar** #44 in March. In fact, let's fantasize about it. Join **Vantage** as we pretend that we can get Valiant to market their books **Vantage**-style. Okay, let's pretend that **X-O** #44 and **Solar** #46 each come with a coupon. Combine the two coupons and mail them in and you get a Bart Sears chromium card with the Visitor on it commemorating the birth of Acclaim Comics. This would be historic, the mark of the start of a new company, also pulling in Acclaim's hottest artist and



X-O Manowar ™ & © 1995 Acclaim Comics

character. The best part could be that it would ship this summer (when the Visitor is to be unmasked) featuring the Visitor without his mask on.

Valiant could even ship it a few weeks before the Visitor is revealed in the comics, making people who get these cards the first to know! Oh man, is this a plan or what? Demand would be focused like a laser on **Solar** #46 and **X-O** #44 because if you buy one you need the two coupons together (and besides, they'll probably be two great books)! The books could very well go up in spite of Valiant's currently sagging aftermarket performance. Fans would start to get excited and more people would start reading **Solar** and **X-O**. Voilà! At the end of our fictional story, Acclaim sees sales go up and they send **Vantage** a check for a billion bucks for giving them this great idea. Hey, it could happen.

THE NEW VALIANT

Here's the finalized line-up of creators paired with each of the books that didn't get cut. Just as interesting is each accompanying plot synopsis reprinted exactly as Valiant gave them to us.

Take a close look, for each synopsis will give you an idea of where all of these books are going, and where they're most likely staying for licensing purposes. **Vantage** has also ranked the titles according to recent retail sales. The number after the title is the Capital City Distribution ranking for December (note that **The Visitor** was a #1 issue for that month).

Take a close look, for each synopsis will give you an idea of where all of these books are going...

1) The Visitor (97). *Penciled alternately by Bernard Chang and Luke Ross, and written by Kevin Van Hook.* Nobody knows who or what The Visitor is, and only a select few know that he is mankind's greatest defense against the evil machinations of the Harbinger Foundation.

2) Ninjak (125). *Penciled by Mike Manley and written by Jorge Gonzalez.* Trained in Japan in the arts of the Ninja and the hacker, Colin King is Ninjak, the ultimate espionage agent. His keen mind and martial arts skills are the only things that stand between his arch enemy Dr. Silk and world domination.

3) X-O Manowar (136). *Penciled alternately by Bart Sears and Andy Smith, and written by Ron Marz.* A barbarian from the past, Aric Dacia defends the earth against alien invaders with the most powerful weapon in the galaxy, an alien suit of armor called X-O Manowar.

4) Turok Dinosaur Hunter (160). *Penciled alternately by Rags Morales and written by Tim Truman.* Transported from the past to save the present from bionically-enhanced dinosaurs, Turok is a nineteenth-century Kiowa brave learning to live in the modern world.

5) Bloodshot (178). *Penciled alternately by Norm Breyfogle (Prime) and Sean Chen, and written by Kevin Van Hook.* With microscopic nanites in his bloodstream, Michael Lazarus has computer-precision control over his mind and body. Bloodshot, a cybernetic Samurai, fights crime as an operative of the British Secret Service.

6) Timewalker (179). *Penciled by Anthony Castrillo and written by "some of the best science fiction writers," said Valiant.* Younger brother of the Eternal Warrior, Timewalker wanders from century to century fighting the good fight, and trying to return to his ancient Egyptian lover, Nefertiti.

7) Magnus Robot Fighter (183). *Penciled alternately by George Saravia and Kevin Kobasic, and written by Tony Bedard.* Magnus Robot Fighter protects his fellow citizens from their own creations, robot servants gone amok. President of a nation reduced by war with robots, Magnus strives to ensure humanity's survival.

8) Solar, Man of the Atom (191). *Penciled and written by Dan Jurgens.* Solar becomes a man with the powers of a god after being caught in a nuclear explosion. Struggling to retain his humanity, he uses his awesome powers as the ultimate weapon in the fight for justice.

9) Eternal Warrior (194). *Drawn alternately by Jackson Guice and Paul Gulacy, and written by John Ostrander.* Born before recorded history, the Eternal Warrior is an immortal soldier waging a timeless battle against human injustice.

10) Shadowman (196). *Penciled and written by Bob Hall.* A New Orleans Jazz musician and voodoo warrior, Shadowman guards against supernatural villains and disasters.

Turok TM & © 1995 Acclaim Comics and Western Publishing Company, Inc.
Tim Truman TM & © 1995 Acclaim Comics.

SELLING AT SHOWS IN 1995

Selling at shows is different in today's market. The rules have changed, often for the better. Yes, for the better!

Just a couple of years ago, the greatest risk in carrying new comics was that the books a show dealer purchased at 40% off might end up in the fifty cent boxes. With just a small fraction of the books going up rapidly and the rest dropping rapidly, dealing at shows was a high-risk venture.

Today, comics are more likely to retain their cover price value. Even if your books don't turn into the **Gen 13** #1s of tomorrow, they're likely to retain value. That's because today's comics have very limited print runs. Plus, dealers are buying a lower portion of these print runs for use as future back-issues. Stores today are more concerned than ever with selling out, due to a slower retail market. Retailers simply do not want to get stuck with leftover new books, so they order low.

The irony is that this makes for fewer recent back issues. Collectors who need to fill holes in their collection will be willing to pay cover price or higher for recent new books that just can't be found anywhere else. With the risk of winding up in a fifty cent box low, buying new books at 40% off seems like a safer bet today than it has been in years.

In the great **Vantage** tradition, we'll put ourselves on the line and give you a few examples of books that are likely to retain cover price value for the near future (or go up). At the very least, show dealers should be able to pick these books up at 40% off and sell them in the months to come at cover price or close to it.

What are we talking about? We're talking about the books that are low-risk, moderate return for show dealers … these picks we'll call Likely Value Holders.

LIKELY VALUE HOLDERS

Esoteric

Animal Mystic. Sirius has a hit here.

Poison Elves. A strong independent with a following.

Deathdealer, Verotika, Jaguar God. Frazetta covers from Verotik, low '95 runs.

Cerebus. Dave Sim's popular series now building up to a 200th issue.

More Traditional Books

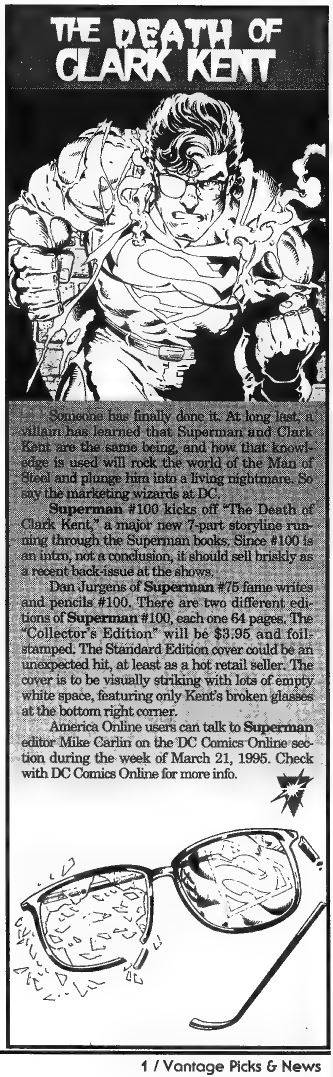
Star Trek: The Next Generation #71-75. DC's Upcoming 5-part storyline features the Borg.

Spawn. The days of too many Spawn #8s, 9s, and 10s are long gone.

X-Men & Uncanny X-Men. Especially the books after this whole new timeline thing is over.

Star Trek: Deep Space Nine. Trekkers hate waiting another month. Give 'em back issues.

Amazing Spider-Man. A shoe-in. Eternal national icon + low runs + the original Spider-title.



Someone has finally done it. At long last, a villain has learned that Superman and Clark Kent are the same being, and how that knowledge is used will rock the world of the Man of Steel and plunge him into a living nightmare. So say the marketing wizards at DC.

Superman #100 kicks off "The Death of Clark Kent," a major new 7-part storyline running through the Superman books. Since #100 is an intro, not a conclusion, it should sell briskly as a recent back-issue at the shows.

Dan Jurgens of **Superman** #75 fame writes and pencils #100. There are two different editions of **Superman** #100, each one 64 pages. The "Collector's Edition" will be $3.95 and foil-stamped. The Standard Edition cover could be an unexpected hit, at least as a hot retail seller. The cover is to be visually striking with lots of empty white space, featuring only Kent's broken glasses at the bottom right corner.

America Online users can talk to **Superman** editor Mike Carlin on the DC Comics Online section during the week of March 21, 1995. Check with DC Comics Online for more info.

VANTAGE QUICKIES

Lightning Comics To Publish Controversial "Nude"

Lightning Comics in April makes Hellina as bad a girl as they get, by creating a nude and non-nude split cover.

Taking Back the Night #1 will feature Hellina in her usual bad girl action. **Taking Back the Night Nude** #1 will feature Hellina naked on the cover, possibly with a polybag covering her more controversial parts with black ink.

Lightning's **Taking Back the Night** #1 will come certified, and signed. Hellina is certainly one of the top candidates for future super-hot bad girl status. The publicity could help, and the controversy will surely have people talking.

Extreme Studios Beats Them To It

In a controversial move, Extreme Studios published **Team Youngblood** #14 with a semi-nude picture of Riptide on the cover and in the interior.

It is unusual for a book from a major publisher to feature nudity. It is an especially controversial move for Image and its Extreme Studios since at least some Image readers are children.

The cover features Riptide completely nude, with a side shot of her torso. Her chest is covered by the Team Youngblood logo in the center of the cover. The famous Image "I" and pricing information are moved to the lower left-hand corner for this issue.

The interior art is even more provocative, as in the storyline Riptide appears as a "Kitten of the Month" centerfold. **Vantage** shudders to think what might happen if some politically-minded mom were to become offended by this book.

Deodato art from Avengers #380

Deodato May Go Exclusive With Marvel

Mike Deodato has entered into negotiations with Marvel for a possible exclusive arrangement, **Vantage** has learned. The deal would make Deodato a near-millionaire. If the deal is consummated, Deodato would only pencil comics from Marvel for an extended period of time, following his run on **Wonder Woman** and **Glory.** This exclusive agreement would include **Avengers,** which Deodato already intends to stick with for two years or more.

Marvel Goes After Top Artists

Marvel has started to aggressively go after top artists, offering big money, according to artist sources in the industry. This is a serious change of strategy for Marvel, which traditionally refused to pay the big money, instead preferring to rely on the strength of their characters for sales. It was this corporate policy that had caused several hot artists to leave and start Image Comics. Marvel's new policy in this matter comes at a time when Valiant has made a similar decision, having hired big guns like Bart Sears and Dan Jurgens.

Extremes of Violet TM & © 1995 Blackout Comics

Extremes of Violet Ships With Surprisingly Good Art

Black Out Comics shipped **Outbreed #4** with a six-page back-up story featuring "Violet." The female heroine is well-rendered by Dell Barras whose hot little pencils are a welcome surprise. Still, the art at times dips into mediocrity. **Extremes of Violet** (no longer **Extreme Violet** due to complaints from Extreme Studios, said a Black Out spokesman) #0 and #1 reintroduce Violet.

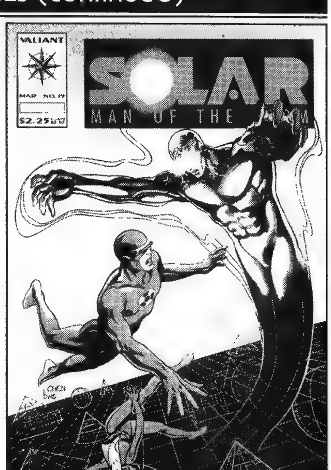
VANTAGE QUICKIES (continued)

The Most Interesting Visitor Theory We've Heard So Far

Okay, here's the theory: We know the Visitor's first appearance was before the Chaos Effect, but we don't know who he was. The Visitor's first appearance may have been **Solar** #19-20. See, in **Visitor vs. The Valiant Universe** #2, Solar tells the Visitor that the Visitor knows what Solar is about to do. That's because the Visitor is the Virtual Reality being that Solar created in #19-20. The being that was able to "steal" Solar's memories. The Virtual Reality being's destiny was unknown... until now! In **Visitor vs. The Valiant Universe** #2, Solar blasted the Visitor with everything he had and was unable to harm him. That's because the being was created by Solar, who is god-like in power and could destroy just about anything else.

Have you got a better theory? Send it in.

Rupert Lawson contributed to this article

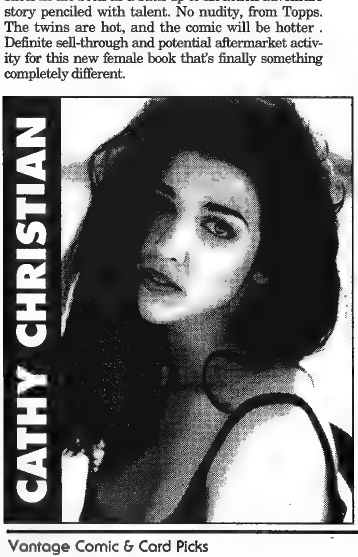


Solar #19: 1st Visitor?

Solar TM & © 1995 Acclaim Comics and Western Publishing Company, Inc.

The Barbie Twins Adventures #1

If this thing doesn't sell, **Vantage** will eat Logan's cigar. It's a double-female flip book based on live twins. These two models pose for various live shots in the book as a back up to an action adventure story penciled with talent. No nudity, from Topps. The twins are hot, and the comic will be hotter . Definite sell-through and potential aftermarket activity for this new female book that's finally something completely different.



Gen 13, The Continuous Series

An orangutan could pick this book. The mini was hot, the series will be heavily pumped in Previews™, Advance™, and Wizard™, and retailers are ordering cautiously in this new marketplace. Chances are high it will at least retain value. The old days of high-profile books being over-ordered are just that — old. Today, high profile doesn't mean automatic over-order, à la **X-Men: Alpha.**

Vampirella Model Joins Extreme

Vampirella model Cathy Christian has left the Vampirella costume behind to join Image as the model for a new character, Avengelyne.

Model Christian and her fiancé, Image Publisher Tony Lobito created the Avengelyne character together. "I've been Vampirella for several years now and I have enjoyed every minute of it," said Christian, "but Tony and I have been knocking around the idea of creating our own character for quite awhile now and we finally decided that the time is right."

Avengelyne will be published by Extreme's Maximum Press line, which puts out comics without the Image label.

VANTAGE QUICKIES (continued)

Silver Surfer TM & © 1995 Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc.
Rune TM & © 1995 Malibu Comics Entertainment, Inc.

Rune / Silver Surfer Team Up

Rune / Silver Surfer #1 will come out in April featuring Malibu's Rune and Marvel's Silver Surfer. Barring any surprises from Malibu marketing (which is not unlikely), this should be the second Marvel/Malibu crossover since Marvel's recent acquisition of Malibu... the famous Malibuy.

Said Marvel Editor Mark Gruenwald, "Silver Surfer is Marvel's premier cosmic character and the ideal choice to link to the two universes." Malibu Editor-In-Chief Chris Ulm said, "The events in **Rune / Silver Surfer** #1 will have a rippling effect in both universes. Would Malibu actually kill a Marvel character? Yes! That's what makes this project fun and exciting. That's the cool factor."

Hey, if you think about it, the Silver Surfer is a naked silver guy on a surf board. Comics can be weird.

Gene Roddenberry's Lost Universe #4

This book ships as another variant cover. The variant will be similar in appearance to the 80% edition, so examine the books carefully. Fan reaction to this book has been pretty positive thus far. The Tekno•Comix launch issues each sold over 100,000 copies, pulling in a 2% market share.

Neil Gaiman's Wheel of Worlds #0

This book launches a whole universe of characters that Neil Gaiman came up with. There is to be a whole string of titles, *and they all start here!* This is a classic backwards-focus of demand, which gives this book a better shot at gaining value than most other Tekno books. This title will include important backstory elements for Mr. Hero and Teknophage. **Neil Gaiman's Wheel of Worlds** #0 will also introduce three characters who will each get his or her own book! This comes to us from sources close to Big and Tekno.

Web of Spider-Man TM & © 1995 Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc.

Spider-Man Update

Marvel says: "In **Amazing Spider-Man** #401 Peter busts out of prison to rescue Mary Jane from Kaine. Has he ruined chances of clearing his name?" (we doubt it) "Will Scarlet Spider help him — or try to take him back? And what about the mysterious man who claims to be the true Peter Parker?"

Actually, Marvel tells us that its in **Spectacular Spider-Man** #224 that we learn the "fate" of the third Peter Parker. The clone, as **Vantage** so brilliantly guessed, has survived past issue #400 and we expect his survival to continue for awhile. Why sell one spider when you can sell two?

Also: as **Vantage** predicted Gwen Stacy's clone is to return shortly.

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Not only is this puppy the rare **Aster** ashcan that predates **Aster** #1, it also has travelled the world. You see, we had to ship these things all the way to the Philippines so that Oliver Isabedra could sign them. Then the poor guy had to shlep them to the local post office or whatever and send them back.

Heck, you should buy one just so you can tell the story of its voyage across the ocean and back.

Vantage has made special arrangements to subsidize the costs of producing signed comics — we are passing the savings on to you, our valued customers! Don't ever pay $30-$60 for a signed book again! *Vantage Signature Series* comics are signed and strictly limited to unfathomably low quantities, and are truly affordable! The catch? There's two of 'em:

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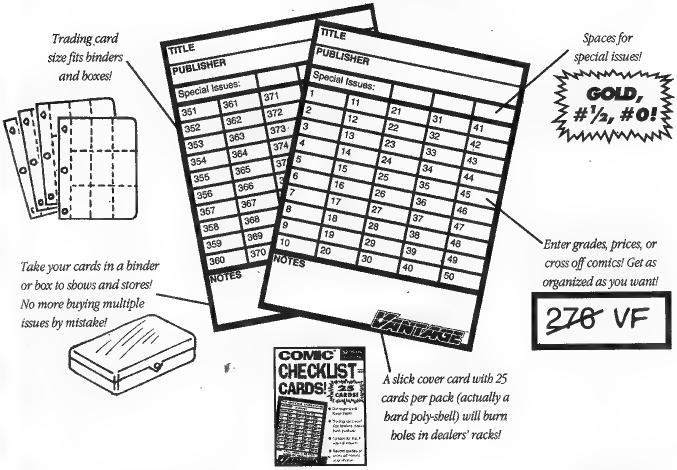
Trading card size fits binders and boxes!
TITLE
PUBLISHER
Special Issues:
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Spaces for special issues!
GOLD, #½, #0!
Enter grades, prices, or cross off comics! Get as organized as you want!
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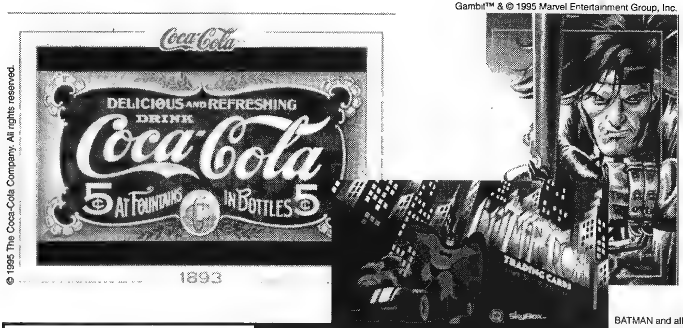

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NON-SPORTS PICKS

CHASING SANTAS ALL YEAR LONG

Perhaps the most successful non-comics cards of the past few years have been the Coca-Cola cards from Collect-A-Card. They've announced that Series Four will be the last set, and collectors are already poised for them. The Series One boxes have already tripled in price, and every show brings in people looking for the gold-foil Santa chase cards and Polar Bear holograms — there is no reason to expect a different response to the newest set. Even though there has been no announcement of chase cards other than the Santas, **Vantage** expects something special to be lurking in the Series Four boxes, and you'll probably want to pick up a few extra boxes as quickly (and cheaply!) as you can.

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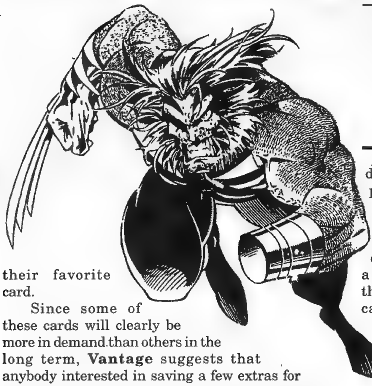
VANTAGE Card Picks

- Coca-Cola Collection Series Four
- Wolverine and Gambit Flair Prints
- Clyde Caldwell Fantasy Art
- Adventures of Batman and Robin

INSTANT REPLAY

Once again Fleer is following the release of a major Marvel card set with a set of ten frame-size cards. This time it is the FlairPrints 1995 Flair Annual, and a box contains four sets of the cards for about $2 each. Surprisingly, this time they've even listed what most of the over-size 6" by 9" cards will be. Collectors already have these cards in normal size in the regular Flair set, and so far sales of the over-size cards have tended to either be to the completists (who need a full set, but aren't a large enough group to cause sell-outs of these cards) or to people who just want a large copy of



Wolverine™ & © 1995 Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc.

their favorite card.

Since some of these cards will clearly be more in demand than others in the long term, **Vantage** suggests that anybody interested in saving a few extras for future trading take advantage of dealers who price them all at the same price level: instead of buying boxes or sets of the ten cards, concentrate on picking up just the Wolverine and Gambit cards. You can also consider the Storm, Carnage, and Spider-Man cards, but steer clear of building up stockpiles of the other cards (when was the last time somebody asked you for a card with Thing or Iron Man on it unless they were just completing a set?)

DRAGONS AND WIZARDS AND DWARVES, OH MY!

One of the most recognizable genres of artwork is that done for TSR for their Dungeons and Dragons games. FPG is releasing a set of cards from Clyde Caldwell, one of the most popular of the artists who have graced TSR's covers, including work on both Dragon Lance and the Forgotten Realms. These cards should arrive to an eager audience, and are one of their strongest fantasy art sets to date. The usual metallic storm chase cards and autograph cards are in place again, and the card set is on FPG's new standard — the heavier 18-point card stock.

BETTER LATE THAN NEVER?

Ask collectors what their pet peeve is about collecting cards, and it will probably have something to do with collation or chase card detection in packs. Ask dealers, and they'll probably be unanimous: late-shipping product. Unlike the comic side of the business, where comics that are too late become returnable, dealers are usually stuck with cards for better or worse. Sometimes this means that more than a few card sets show up all at once, and some of them do more poorly than they should. What causes the delays? Who knows — late art, production problems, possibly even a desire to ship in a time slot away from a major Marvel card set. This month an unusual number of previously ordered card sets have been canceled and resolicited. Since these include former Vantage picks and speculative picks, you need to be on your toes or you may miss them!

You need to be on your toes or you may miss them!

The Gargoyles Cards from SkyBox feature some spectacular art in a gothic vein from the Disney television show — a real sleeper!

The Vertigo Tarot Deck and Book Set features

Sandman & Death™ & © 1995 DC Comics, Inc.

artwork from Dave McKean, who uses the characters from Sandman, Swamp Thing, etc. In addition, a hardcover book of instructions with an introduction from Neil Gaiman offers a guide to using the cards. The print run is limited to 16,500 copies, and the cards were solicited under Comic novelties rather than in the Trading Cards section of retailer catalogs, and they are likely to be missed by a lot of people (not to mention dealers who think they've already ordered them).

The Betty Boop card solicitation from Krome Productions (the company that did the Lady Death cards) has been re-vroomed. There will now be a chromium card in every pack (part of a twenty-card subset), an oversize chromium card will come in each box, and the card box itself will be chromium this time. Clearly there will be great demand for the chromium subset, but **Vantage** remains unconvinced that the regular black-and-white cards will reach a large audience.

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National Pastime All-Chromium cards, a ninety-card set that features pictures of baseball the way it used to be — players who didn't go on strike, old uniforms, old stadiums, old cards, etc. This small, affordable set will appeal to many fans who haven't collected cards in a long time, and the all-chromium format should give them a valuable look. Completists will want the binder — it comes with a six-card uncut sheet.

HOLY POP-UP DISPLAY, BATMAN!

Looking for a new way to play with your cards? The box that contains the new SkyBox Adventures of Batman and Robin cards will turn into a Batmobile, and one in every three packs has a pop-up card that is to scale! The set features artwork from the cartoon show, but it also has a set of 9 foil cards and heat sensitive Dark Knight chase cards (the picture is black until you heat it up — this was first used with certain X-rated cards!) **Vantage** expects the chase cards for this set to push sales in a way that more resembles the first Batman animated cards than the second set — and for a change you might even be able to sell the box the cards come in!

SPECULATIVE CORNER

Fair warning — it's a sports card set this time! Comic Images is bringing out the Phil Rizzuto

QUICK NOTES

It looks like Fleer is going to release a comic or cartoon non-sports card set every month. This month brings us the Fleer Ultra ReBoot cards. Computer-generated art for this set is based on a Saturday morning cartoon show. Lots of regular cards (150), lots of chase cards (three sets totaling 24 cards), but not a lot of name recognition. How will these cards do? **Vantage** has a suggestion — ask a dozen people in your area what ReBoot is — if even a few of them know about the show, these cards have a least a chance to sell a few packs.

Check the cards out early – you may be pleasantly surprised.

FPG is also putting out the James Warhola Fantasy Art Cards this month. His artwork includes covers for numerous big name writers, but he doesn't have the name recognition or built-in audience that Clyde Caldwell does. Check the cards out early — you may be pleasantly surprised.

If you had to name the comics most likely to be turned into movies, it would be a long time before you got down to Tank Girl, but here it comes! The card set from Comic Images features movie pictures and some comic pictures, and a six-card chase set features artwork from the comics.

Kitchen Sink has brought us **The Spirit** comics for decades, and now they are bringing out The Spirit card set. A single Spirit card was available in a **Wizard**™ special edition a few years back, and this gives Spirit fans 36 cards. Of slightly more interest — 500 uncut sheets will be autographed and sold separately — as with the autographed **Wizard**™ card, these should fetch much higher prices long term.

If you live in an area populated by Goths, it might be a good idea to pick up a few sets of John Bolton's Vampir Theater card set. This is a set of 12 regular cards and one foil oversized card (with a strange size: 2.5" by 7" card). In addition to the regular card set, collectors of the rare can order a signed card set or a bronze card, each of which is limited to only 662 copies.

ACTION FIGURES

Have you seen a Hamburger Spawn figure yet? The latest release of the Spawn figures from Todd Toys includes a rare figure that features Spawn without his mask — hence the "Hamburger" name (Spawn's face is not pretty).

Something else exciting showed up this month in the latest round of Marvel action figures. Many of the recent figures have shipped with Fleer trading cards, including Ultra Fleer X-Men cards from both Series One and Series Two. The cards appeared to be random, but the latest releases actually included chase cards — **Vantage** spied a lot of figures with Fatal Attractions chase cards, which guide for about $8 each. In itself, that would make for a lot of fun, but the next time **Vantage** went shopping we found some figures with the Team Triptych chase cards.

Why is this exciting? Because these chase cards were originally found only in the Wal-Mart Ultra Fleer boxes. Although these chase cards only run $3-4, they imply something that **Vantage** hasn't been able to confirm: there is a chance that the figures might include the Silver X-O chase cards, and those puppies go for $15-20 each. These six chase cards are easily overlooked because they look exactly like regular cards in the set except for the foil-coating that was added to them. Now THAT'S something to go looking for!

IF IT CAN HAPPEN TO THE **X-MEN** IT CAN HAPPEN TO **VANTAGE.**

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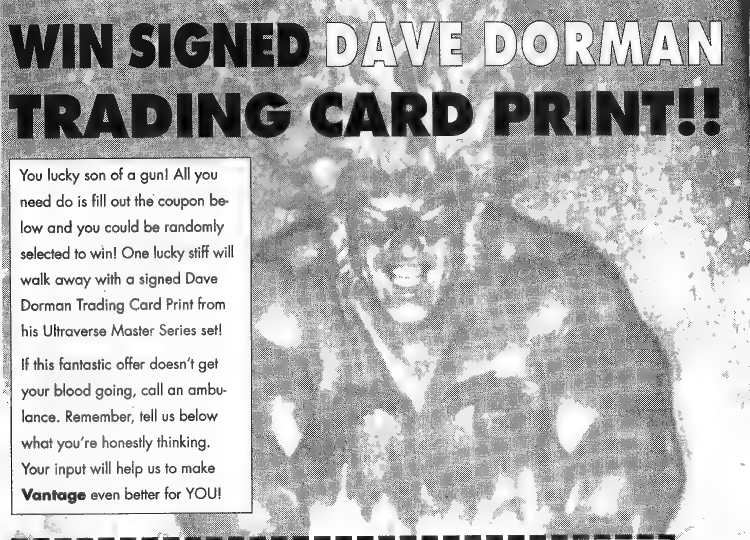

You lucky son of a gun! All you need do is fill out the coupon below and you could be randomly selected to win! One lucky stiff will walk away with a signed Dave Dorman Trading Card Print from his Ultraverse Master Series set!

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CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

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Three back-issue comics I might buy soon:

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

Three titles I recently started reading:

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

☐ (Optional) Hey **Vantage,** as long as I'm writing you, here's my quick two cents for Vantage Viewpoints! I want you to know what my dream crossover would be, what I think of this month's news, what I'm having for dinner tonight, or some other pointless drivel:

_____

_____

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TIPS FOR YOUR NEXT $HOW!

This month **Vantage** kicks off a new feature. Tips For Your Next Show will attempt to help dealers turn a greater profit during these unusual times. Many of our references to comic books can also be applied to cards, toys, and so on.

1) **Location, Location, Location.** The average person generally won't buy from the first few tables because they want to shop, but they usually spend their money long before they make it all the way around the room. If you are in the wrong place with the right books, your sales will be much lower than you would like. As you do each show, make notes on where traffic flows, and where it seems to be heaviest, and try to get there. Once you find a good spot, try to stay there. Believe it or not, you will develop regular customers, and they will start looking for you. If you aren't in your normal spot they may assume you aren't at the show and buy from somebody else.

2) **Choose a Pricing Method.** Many successful dealers put price stickers on their books. It may be a lot of work, but customers like it. Many people assume that unpriced books are either full guide or cover price. If you are discounting books, it helps to list both the guide price and your selling price. Pricing books can be rough, though, since market prices can change rapidly. You may want to skip prices for books that could be volatile. One useful method is to use a guide (give them a discount — tell them the guide price, then give your lower price). For more volatile books, you can rip an ad out of a comic book or out of CBG™. Tape it on the back of your boxes where only you can see it and use it as a quick reference. Then, to avoid having impatient customers leave when they can't find a price tag, put up signs that say "Cheap," "Way Below Guide," etc.

3) **Have Signs Everywhere.** Signs drawn in happy, bright magic marker can attract droves of people to your table. It makes your table look like an event, and people will buy where they shop, so make them shop where you are!

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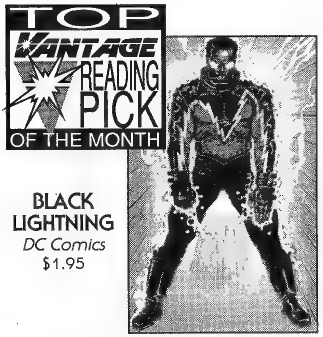
COMICS ARE FOR READING First!

By Rich Keller



In 1977 writer Tony Isabella created Black Lightning, one of the first non-white super-heroes in the DC Universe. His goal was to make a hero that both black and white children and adults could like and look up to. Like, because of his really cool lightning powers; look up to, because of his daily role as high school teacher Jefferson Pierce. Unfortunately Isabella's goals fell to the budget ax after 11 issues, relegating his character to small roles in Detective, World's Finest, and Batman & the Outsiders comics. As the late 1980s rolled around, Black Lightning was nowhere to be seen (actually he was in Bolivia playing cards with Jimi Hendrix and John F. Kennedy).

Well, times have changed, as well as comic book tastes. And with DC resurrecting everything and everyone under the sun, it's no shock that Isabella has reappeared to present a Black Lightning monthly series for the 1990s. But if you're expecting that guy with the Afro wig and the costume with wide lapels, be ready for a surprise.

Jefferson Pierce no longer lives in Gotham City. He's moved to the Midwest city. Its real name is not given, possibly because Isabella wanted this city to represent every city. He's also older — nearly pushing 40 (which in comics means he started when he was about ten). His costume is different as well: more subdued colors, no more mask because his eyes emit lightning flashes, hiding his true identity.

But that's all cosmetics for what the story is really about. You see, his city has all of the everyday problems of most cities across this country — drugs, guns, gangs, poverty. Black Lightning is the only hero in town, and he's got quite a bit to clean up. Here is where the problem lies. It's also where Isabella's story really comes together. Pierce isn't some obsessed hero under a flimsy alter ego. He's not a newspaper reporter, or a millionaire, nor a playboy test pilot. His every waking hour is not dedicated to ridding every corner of his city from filth. He's a teacher, and he devotes most of his time to that profession. In addition, he contributes to community service, and is also an avid church goer. In other words, Pierce lives his life to

It's no shock that Isabella has reappeared to present a Black Lightning monthly series for the 1990s. But if you're expecting that guy with the Afro wig and the costume with wide lapels, be ready for a surprise..

the fullest while having a part-time job as a super-being, not the other way around. This is a man who doesn't let his super-hero role overshadow his life as a human being. This creates a constant internal struggle for Pierce. He is always trying to weigh which is more important to him. In the end, both are equally as important.

Another element of this book surprises me. Lightning isn't going off to save the universe from an alien invasion, nor is he patrolling the world for acts of terrorism — Isabella has decided to save those feats for books like Superman for the time being. The only thing he's doing in this book is saving his adopted city from crumbling any further than it has. His main goal when he puts on the costume is to make sure his friends, family, and all residents of the city can feel safe in their own homes and on their streets. Sure, you can say that this is selfish, but aren't we all selfish? Don't we want to make our homes and streets safer for ourselves, and our children? Isabella's character isn't just one man living in one city, he's (dare I say it) Everyman living in Every City. Black Lightning is an embodiment of what we want and wish to do with our cities today, he just has the powers to back his actions up. However, he also realizes he can't do it alone, and it'll take everyone in the city to fix what's been damaged.

This series may run just 12 issues, or it may run forever. Being an optimist, I pick the latter. So get on the bandwagon early and pick up a copy of Black Lightning today.

FREAK FORCE
Image Comics
$1.95

Freak Force, Roll Call! (To the tune of the Mickey Mouse Club theme):

Mighty Man — He's quite a manly hero, who's alter ego is a woman; SuperPatriot — His arms, legs, and part of his face were replaced by robotics after they were blown off; Rapture — She was a former hooker who was experimented on by an mad scientist (aren't they all); Ricochet — Um, she kinda bounces around a lot; And of course, Annette, Cubby, and the rest of the Mouseketeers.

All right, they're not the Justice League (because if they were there would be such a lawsuit). However, they are quietly gaining a following, and a foothold, in the Image Universe.

Freak Force is a monthly series by Savage Dragon creator Erik Larsen, and writer/plotter

It's the story of seven guys and gals with superpowers who decide they have no place to turn; therefore, they turn to each other and form a team. It's "The Real World" meets the X-Men.

Keith Giffen. It's the story of seven guys and gals with superpowers who decide they have no place to turn; therefore, they turn to each other and form a team. It's "The Real World" meets the X-Men.

This book clearly has elements of both Larsen and Giffen, and neither one overshadows the other. It's definitely a team book in every sense of the word. On the one hand, you have Larsen's gift for in-your-face action and adventure. On the other, you have Giffen's gift for making people out of these heroes, while not making them too heavy-handed. Combined, you receive an even mix of action/adventure as well as lightheartedness and character development.

Giffen has perfected his characterization technique through such works as Justice League and Legion of Super-Heroes. He and Larsen realize that even though these heroes battle bad dudes most of the day, they also have to be human beings once in a while. They show this through daily activities that the average Vantage reader would do: eat, sleep, breathe. Granted, it's not exactly true to life, but it gives the reader the feeling that he could actually get to know these heroes as people as well.

I mean that's what they basically are, aren't they? These are people who, by some fate of nature, gained these powers, and are now considered dangerous to some and frightening to us. The moral of this book is primarily "You can't tell a book by it's cover." Just because they have these powers that frighten people, doesn't mean they aren't frightened as well.

By joining these "Freaks" together as a team, the writers are saying, "Look, just because they're not pleasing to you, doesn't mean they can't help out in some way." We do that a lot in the real world. We shun people for the way they look and act: the mentally and physically challenged for example. Yet, we know that most of them can perform many of the same duties that we can. However, we sometimes forget this and never give them the chance. Freak Force is asking for a chance to show what they can do.

Look, do you like adventure, do you like action, do you like heroes in skimpy, skin-tight outfits? Well, undaunted Vantage reader, Freak Force is for you.

Hey, boys and girls, send me your material. Write to Rich Keller, Risky Associates, 25 Arney's Mt. Road, Pemberton, NJ 08068. All material received will be considered for review.

Ricochet and Rapture™ & © 1995 Eric Larsen

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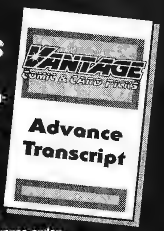

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MIKE DEODATO SPEAKS!

(In Portuguese!)

Wonder Woman artwork™ & © 1995 DC Comics, Inc.

Thirty-one year old Mike Deodato, Jr. is the hot new artist on **Wonder Woman,** but he can't tell you about it ... unless you speak Portuguese. The artist, who lives in São Paulo, Brazil, answered our questions in his native language. These are the English translations.

A SHORT DEODATO HISTORY

1991: **Santa Claws** penciled and inked for Malibu: **1st Deodato.**

1992. **Ferret** and **Protectors** for Malibu.

1993: **Quantum Leap, Beauty and the Beast, Lost In Space, The Executioner,** for Innovation. **Hybrids, Samuree** for Continuity. **The New Miracle Man** for Eclipse. Started **Wonder Woman** for DC: **1st major title.**

1994: **Turok** for Valiant (Deodato assisted by his studio), **Avengers** (pencil breakdowns).

Deodato has his own studio made up of other Brazilian artists. The studio often assists him on some projects. Other items of interest: ongoing **Darkstars** covers (DC Comics), Lady Death pin-up, **Turok** four-part story for '95.

"Barbie Shannon" from Campi & Deodato's ***Power-Sword*** *proposed series. ™ & © Campi & Deodato.*

It's amazing how invigorating fans can be! I think that's the most satisfying part of my work.

VANTAGE: *What will be your last issue on* ***Wonder Woman?***

Deodato: Issue #100 will be my last issue on **Wonder Woman.** I'll really miss those gorgeous babes. It was a treat working with Kupperberg and Loebs — and the storyline was real exciting.

"ALL OF THEM!"
"I THINK SO, BUT ARTEMIS IS IN THE LEAD!"
"YES, THE STRIFE ARE ALL THERE. ARTEMIS IS RIGHT, SO SHARPE."
"AND HERE IT'S SHARPE!"
"SHE'S MAKING CHANGES!"
"SHE'S CHEATING WITH ARTEMIS!"
"IT'S JUST ONE LAST TURN!"
"WOW! SHE LOOKS THREE!"
"BUT SHE'S READY FOR ANYTHING!"
"AND SHE HAS ONE OF THE BEST ALL AROUND RACERS IN THE WORLD!"
"AND HER PARTNER CAN SEE EVERYTHING!"

Wonder Woman artwork™ & © 1995 DC Comics, Inc.

VANTAGE: *Are you aware of the strong positive fan reaction in the US?*

Deodato: It started dawning on me after I read the letter section in **Wonder Woman** #92. Fans' response was fantastic! It's amazing how invigorating fans can be! I think that's the most satisfying part of my work. I just don't know if I really deserve that much.

VANTAGE: *Is it exciting to be working with Liefeld and in American comics?*

Deodato: Liefeld has an intriguing and powerful work. It is really inspiring. For me it's both a pleasure and an honor to do a book for Image — a company whose graphic quality excels from tip to toe — especially **Glory,** with the outstanding scripts by Jo Duffy. Breaking into the American market was always a dream for me. I've been living this dream since 1991, thanks to my agents [Art & Comics / Glass House Graphics], who never spared efforts to see my work printed abroad.

VANTAGE: *How many issues of* ***Glory*** *do you expect to draw?*

Deodato: I had agreed to sign a contract with another company [Marvel] before being contacted by Image, so I'm afraid I won't be able to do a great number of issues.

VANTAGE: *Do you read any comics?*

Deodato: I try to read everything by Miller, Moore, and Gaiman and I buy everything Image puts out. I love everything Moebius did, as well as Ken Parker by Millazo and Gerardi. It's real easy to get American comics in Brazil (even though I haven't completed my **Spawn** collection so far — it's missing issues #2, 3, and #4!).

Hey – you mentioned my fans. So ... should I assume there's more than one?

VANTAGE: *How did you break into comics?*

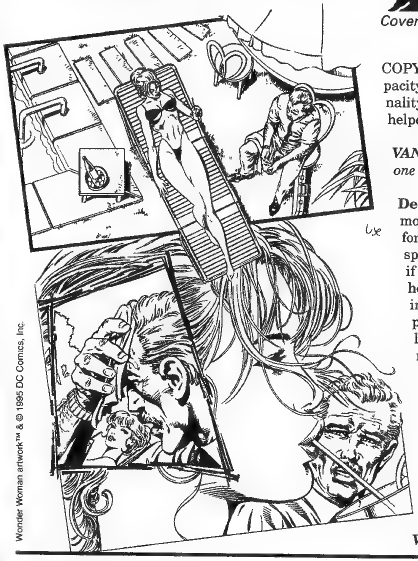
Deodato: Brazil is a good market for foreign comics (especially American), but not for Brazilian creators. Influenced by my father — Mike Deodato, Sr. — I began to draw comics in 1978. In 1984 I did a giant-size book titled **3,000 Years Later** on my own. It saw print in Brazil and Germany. In 1985 I was hired by the governor of Paraíba, my state, to do **Paraíba's History In A Comic Book.** From '85 through '90 my work was printed by most of the Brazilian publishers. As it's hard to live on comics alone in Brazil, artists end up making their living on other things. Throughout those years, besides comic books, I also worked as a lay-out man in a newspaper and as an illustrator in an advertising agency. In '91 I saw a light at the end of the tunnel: Art & Comics — a Brazilian agency representing several Brazilian artists — hired me. Oh, what a relief! I could finally make a good living with comics without leaving my country, drawing the characters I loved since I was a kid!

VANTAGE: *How did you learn to draw?*

Deodato: Copying! I followed the advice of a master named Will Eisner: COPY! COPY!

Darkstars™ & © 1995 DC Comics, Inc

Cover for upcoming Darkstars #26



Wonder Woman artwork™ & © 1995 DC Comics, Inc.

COPY as much as you can. It is out of the incapacity to create, imitating perfection, that originality is born. My father — an artist himself — helped me a lot too.

VANTAGE: *How many pages can you draw in one month? How fast are you?*

Deodato: Usually I pencil and ink 22 pages a month for **Wonder Woman** plus breakdowns for **The Avengers** and a couple of covers. My speed is 10 miles per hour but I can run faster if chased by a raving dog. Wha... you mean how fast can I draw? Well, I can pencil and ink one page and a half a day, or pencil three pages a day. As I'm not as fast as I would like to be, I try to make up for it by working non-stop, meaning Sundays and holidays as well.

VANTAGE: *Do you have a dream project that you'd like to work on some day?*

Deodato: To pencil and ink a Giant-Size Pitt vs. The Hulk, colored by computer. Oh... and written by either Miller or Moore.

VANTAGE: *Where in Brazil do you live?*

Deodato: I live in João Pessoa, capital of Paraíba. It has gorgeous beaches and it was chosen as the second greenest city in the world! (The first one was Paris).

VANTAGE: How is your English?

Deodato: My English knowledge? I can read things. I can hardly speak. Fortunately I have complete assistance from my agents.

VANTAGE: Have you been to the US?

Deodato: Yes, I visited the States in '93 to help promote **Beauty and the Beast.** My first impression was that in the USA things work. [In Brazil] it is really assuring to live in a country where democracy and the economy are so stable. It has gone through deep changes for the past two years. Now we have a decent President, inflation is under control, and the country has started prospering again.

It is out of the incapacity to create, imitating perfection, that originality is born. My father – an artist himself – helped me a lot too.

VANTAGE: Do you think you might return to the States soon to meet your new fans?

Deodato: I'm hoping to go to the states this year to meet my fans, and most of all, to meet my own idols. The closest I got to one of my idols was in '93 when I met Neal Adams' daughter — who, by the way, did not like my art (later she said she loved it)! Hey — you mentioned my fans. So ... should I assume there's more than one?

A look at the Deodato studio's work on Turok for Valiant

Turok™ & © 1995 Voyager Communications, Inc. and Western Publishing Company, Inc.

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The Comic Book Market

How It All Works

A Vantage Guide

1) Joe's sends in an order for 50 ***Big Hero*** #1's.

2) Order received by distributor.

3) Distributor tells publisher how many to print.

4) Big Hero gets the order and prints about as many as stores, dealers, and some collectors have ordered in advance. (back at step 1)

5) Big Hero sends to stores what was ordered.

Joe's pretty experienced and chances are he ordered what he needed- but if he was not told that *Big Hero* #1 featured the first appearance of Big Heroine, he could have too few copies, and demand could go up!

VANTAGE™

THE VIEW FROM OBLIVION

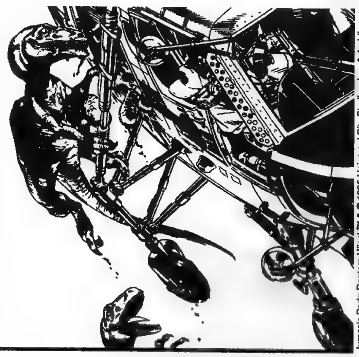
By Corey Bond

I remember being at a party one time where the guests began reminiscing about the TV shows that they watched as children, and how they seem to have completely disappeared (the shows, not the guests) into, well, Oblivion. Each guest would mention the title of their show, tell a little bit about whatever aspects of the program they could remember, and then everyone else would chime in, "Oh, yeah, I remember that show!" Of course, that is not how it went when my turn arrived. After describing the show that I remembered, I spent the next twenty minutes defending the possibility that a show that absurd could possibly exist. My example was The Lost Saucer, a live-action Saturday morning show starring Jim (Gomer Pyle) Nabors and Ruth Buzzi as androids who picked up a couple of kids in their flying saucer and then spent the rest of the series trying to find the Earth again so that they could take the kids back home. They had a pet "dorse," which was half-dog and half-horse, named (wait for it) "Dorsey." Honest. I failed to convince anyone at the party that I wasn't either hallucinating or lying through my teeth. It wasn't until the next party that I was vindicated, when the person who had most vocally argued against the existence of The Lost Saucer admitted that he had since found it listed in a book about old TV shows on one of his trips to Waldenbooks.

"How can Topps get away with publishing a comic book title that begins with 'X' without getting sued by Marvel?"

Apparently I'm not the only guy thinking about TV shows. Look at Topps Comics and how they are growing rapidly as a publisher by taking the Dark Horse Comics road to success. This is certainly not a bad plan. Dark Horse came into their own in the comics world by licensing characters from popular movies: Aliens, Predator, Terminator, Indiana Jones, and more recently, Star Wars. Fighting to be noticed on the ever-burgeoning racks of new comics, Dark Horse went with titles that would gain instant reader recognition, and it worked for them.

Topps now seems to be following suit with their own arsenal of licensed characters from movies and television: Bram Stoker's Dracula, Mary Shelley's Frankenstein, Exo-Squad, Duckman, and of course, the top-grossing film of all time, Jurassic Park. My favorite of these is Duckman. Issue One captured the deranged humor of the animated series perfectly and, honestly, there should be more William S. Burroughs references and Naked Lunch takeoffs in comics. If you're unfamiliar with



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Burroughs and his novels, I recommend that you take the same approach that you did in school when you had a book report due: watch the movie. Naked Lunch, available at fine video stores everywhere, stars Peter Weller, who had the lead roles in Buckaroo Banzai and the first two RoboCop movies. It ranks as one of the most enjoyably bizarre movies that I've ever seen, and still doesn't compare to the novel in terms of sheer weirdness and perversity.

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The Topps Comics adaptation that I am anticipating the most, however, is **The X-Files**. Like Duckman, The X-Files is one of the few television shows that I still take the time to watch. It stars David Duchovney and Gillian Anderson as Fox Mulder and Dana Scully, FBI agents who investigate paranormal cases, designated "X-files." Mulder, whose baby sister was abducted by aliens when they were both children, is driven to investigate strange happenings in hopes that one day he can be reunited with his sister, or at least come to an understanding of what happened to her. Scully is the cynic, originally paired with Mulder to keep him in check. One would have to assume, however, that after everything these two have experienced, her cynicism is waning. After all, she's held an extraterrestrial fetus in her hands, and been abducted herself (the reason for her abduction is never made 100% clear...my theory is that Mars Needs Women).

Some fans of The X-Files may not be aware that Mulder is not the first FBI agent that David Duchovney has portrayed. He also appeared on a couple of episodes of Twin Peaks (another series steeped in weirdness) as a cross-dressing colleague of Agent Dale Cooper (Kyle MacLachlan). I think there is some potential here for a Twin Peaks/X-Files crossover. While I have no desire to see agent Mulder in drag, a guest appearance by Kyle MacLachlan would be interesting. I'd love to see him tell Mulder that "the owls are not what they seem." Actually, considering agent Cooper's final fate in the series finale of Twin Peaks, he would make an interesting X-file himself. Topps should consider it. After all, if Dark Horse could do Aliens vs. Predator...

Anyway, the first issue of **The X-Files** comic involves Mulder and Scully investigating the Prophecy of Fatima. For those of you who didn't have the distinct pleasure of attending Catholic parochial schools, the story goes that the Virgin Mary appeared to three children in Fatima, Portugal, and presented them with three prophecies, two of which came to pass. The Pope decided to keep the details of the third prophesy to himself, lest mankind have to suffer its consequences. Now, in **The X-Files** #1, the third prophecy has turned up, and those who read it go crazy and then die.

I think writer Stefan Petrucha's choice of subject matter for the first issue is intriguing. My only concern is that the Prophecy of Fatima is a famous and specific mystery, as opposed to the subject matter of the TV series, which is usually more general or more topical. I would hate for the comic to become the "Kolchak the Nightstalker" version of The X-Files, with Mulder and Scully solving the mysteries of the pyramids, the prophecies of

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ibly obvious "secret" identities? How can Topps get away with publishing a comic book title that begins with "X" without getting sued by Marvel? The possibilities are limitless.

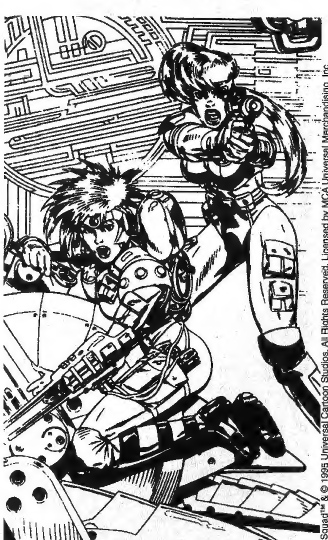
Obviously, The X-Files is one of my favorite television programs. The mysteries and conspiracies get more intricate and involved with each episode. But sometimes I worry that the show's writers don't actually know the Truth that agent Mulder pursues so doggedly, and that they are simply making up the X-Files mythos as they go along. This is okay, as long as they don't choke at the moment of truth. I dread the episode in which Mulder finally has a close encounter of the third kind, when an alien spacecraft lands before him, light streams out of the opening doorway, and the air is filled with Jim Nabors' booming voice, "Surprise, sur-prise, sur-prise!"

(Corey Bond, X-ophile in Oblivion, is waiting to see an episode end with Mulder and Scully foiling the plans of some bogus creature, who then removes his latex mask and yells, "...and it would have worked, too, if not for those meddling kids!")

Nostradamus, etc. Granted, the TV series has had its share of archetypal creatures, such as vampires, but it's not as though Mulder encountered Dracula. I probably need not worry, however. The investigation of the Fatima prophecies is a far cry from "Next issue: Agents Mulder and Scully, having successfully captured Sasquatch, travel to Loch Ness!"

Speaking of archetypal monsters, I often joke about wanting to see an episode in which Godzilla is an X-file. Picture this: Manhattan Island has been leveled, and the FBI agents are dispatched to New York to investigate the devastation. There aren't any witnesses, of course, but the official explanation is that nuclear missiles are responsible. Mulder, never willing to accept a mundane explanation for anything, insists that the deed was done by a giant radioactive dinosaur. "I've got evidence," he says. "Look at these enormous footprints!" Scully, always pragmatic, replies, "Mulder, those are blast craters!"

Another possibility is that The X-Files' transition from TV show to comic book could mimic that of Beavis & Butt-head. On the TV show, Beavis & Butt-head make fun of music videos, while in the comic they trash other comic books. Perhaps the comic book versions of Mulder and Scully could investigate phenomena unique to comics. Why do super-heroes always return from the dead? Why does radiation bestow superpowers instead of causing sickness and death? How do heroes fool their supporting casts with incred-



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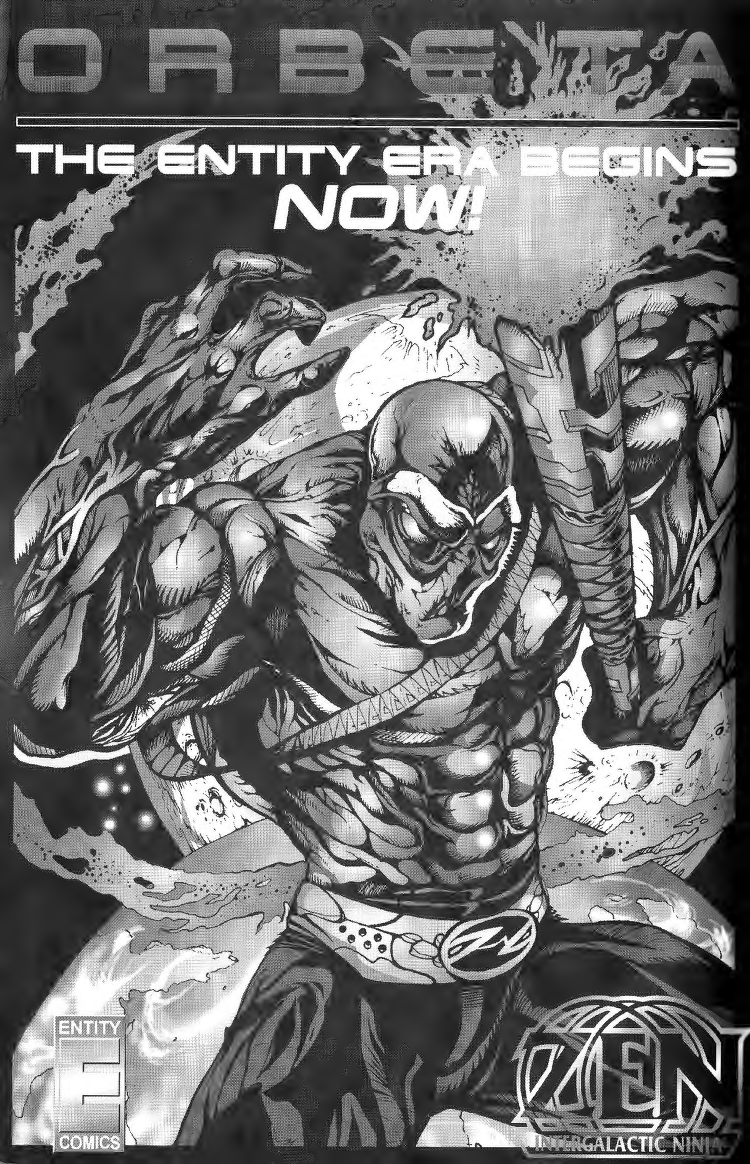
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